European Social Survey

Fieldwork Design in Multiple Countries: Moving from a decentral to a model for more central fieldwork monitoring

CSDI 2017 Mannheim
16 March 2017

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Fieldwork Design in Multiple Countries

Data collection is to facilitate the collection of information about the population under study in a *uniform* and *reliable way* within a budget and timeframe (Weinberg, 1983)

One size doesn't fit all

Challenges facing data collection (Pennell and Cibelli Hibben, 2016):

- Social and cultural context: e.g. one or more languages, communication norms
- Political context: e.g. political system, existence of political tension
- Economic conditions and infrastructure: e.g. economic climate, penetration of communication channels
- Physical environment: e.g. weather conditions, geography
- Research traditions and experience: e.g. capacity of survey agencies, established methodological practices

→ Strike a balance between perfect standardization and local adaption

Fieldwork Design in the European Social Survey

European Social Survey

- Cross-national survey in up to about 30 European countries,
- Face to face,
- Every two years.

Central monitoring is important

- *comparability*
- *consistency*: setting and improving standards to advance rigour in cross-national survey research.

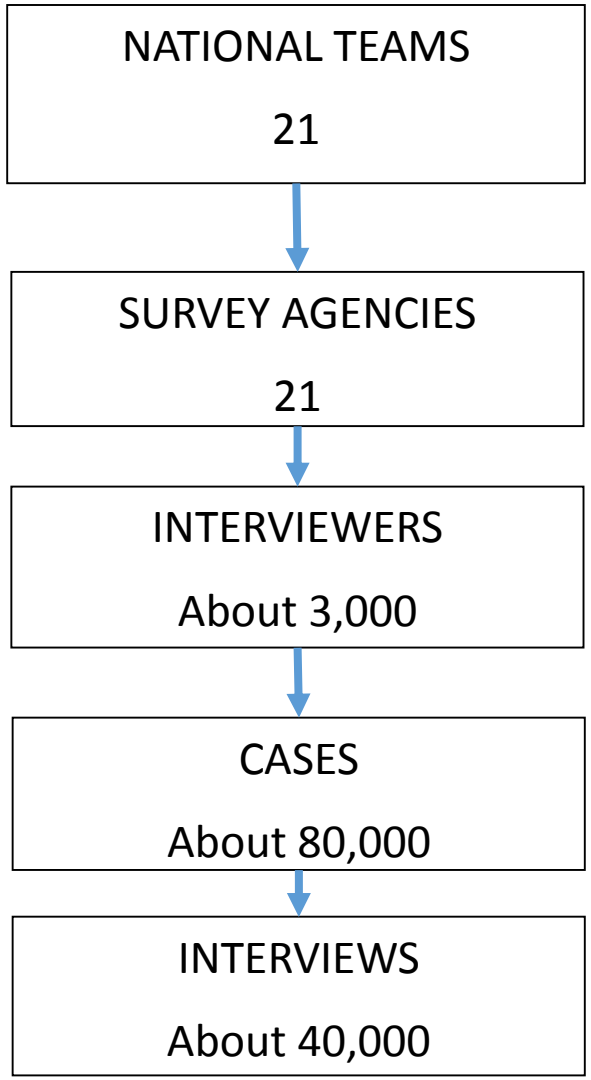
Levels of responsibilities re planning, monitoring and managing:

- National teams
- Central team
- Local survey agencies

Data Collection in the ESS

CST (Core Scientific Team)

- ESS HQ – UK
- GESIS – Germany
- KU Leuven - Belgium
- NSD – Norway
- SCP –Netherlands
- UPF - Spain
- U of Ljubljana- Slovenia



Central monitoring of data collection – process

Central team (CST)

- Collaboration of 7 institutes throughout Europe;
- Advises and supports national teams throughout the process of data collection;
- Assigns each national team a central point of contact (Country Contacts).

More specifically:

- Evaluates data collection in previous round and provides feedback (e.g. Quality Matrix)
- Collects information on planning of data collection for each country (e.g. fieldwork questionnaire, fieldwork projections); different planning decisions discussed and agreed with national teams.
- Monitors cross-national progress based on available information; information is evaluated and if necessary issues are discussed with the national teams asap.

Central Monitoring in the ESS - implementation

Current situation of ESS Fieldwork Monitoring

- Guidelines on Fieldwork Progress Monitoring
- National teams record contact data; contact form data is deposited after end fieldwork
- National teams to report weekly or bi-weekly (if expected fieldwork period is more than 10 weeks) to CST (assigned contact)

Minimum reporting requirements from agencies to national teams to central team:

- Total selected sample
- # of sample units where no contact has been attempted yet
- # of achieved interviews
- # of ineligibles
- # of non-contacts
- # of refusals

Central Monitoring in the ESS - implementation

National teams are strongly recommended to monitor:

- Detailed breakdown of outcome codes (region, interviewer ID, demographics) – when available
- Assignment size per interviewer
- Interview length
- Contact patterns (monitor compliance with ESS contact strategy)
- # of cases in progress,
- # of completed interviews not received yet,
- Re-issues and back-checks.

Challenges of Decentral approach

Challenges of current approach:

- **Delays in flow of information from interviewers to central team**
  - Collecting contact information using paper forms
  - Long chain of communication (from interviewer to central team)
- **Inconsistencies in information (incomplete)**
- **More detailed information is in some cases not available (to central team nor to national team)**

→ Fast response to realities is crucial during fieldwork

- More detailed information makes diagnose and remedy easier and faster
- Early identification of problems to allow enough time to change course during fieldwork period

Now we need to rethink how to monitor and manage fieldwork across countries more effectively

Fieldwork Monitoring – Real time contact data

→ Former DASISH project and currently SERISS (WP4 'Interactive Tools for Cross-National Surveys', see www.seriss.eu)

Fieldwork Management and Monitoring System (FMMS)

Goals

- "real time" information on fieldwork progress
- Standardisation of contact data collection and progress reports during fieldwork
- Data collection on the doorstep
- Increase the quality of contact data collected

FMMS has two components:

1. Mobile app(lication): replace paper contact form and enable data collection on the doorstep
2. Centralised case management system (CCMS): manage the transfer of information between interviewers and agency; access to up-to-date contact data; produce progress reports in a standardized manner

Fieldwork Monitoring – Real time contact data (II)

- **Operational challenges**
  - Urge interviewers to record information immediately/very soon in case management system
  - Interviewer records information according to protocol/guidelines
  - Teach interviewers to collect contact data on a device (mobile phone or laptop)
  - Enough capacity to monitor incoming information (at central and national team) → simple dashboard and generate short summary reports from central case management system
  - Differences in sample frames and respondent selection procedures

- **Technological challenges**
  - Differences in IT resources between countries (existing bespoke mgmt tool? paper contact form? level of technological infrastructure?)
  - Internet availability in some areas and on devices
  - Link fieldwork tool with local CAPI program

Fieldwork Monitoring – Real time contact data (III)

- **Ethical challenge**
  - Data protection regulations differ between countries: not all contact data can be transferred to a central case management system → configure system to accommodate for local storage of data

- **Other challenges**
  - Selection of 'key performance indicators' from vast array of performance indicators based on e.g. central monitoring priorities and justification for their use, operational needs (Jans et al, 2013)
  - Investment by survey agencies to make required performance indicators available in a new (central case management) system→ data upload portal for a predefined set of indicators?

- …more challenges?

Fieldwork Monitoring – Real time contact data (IV)

What will real-time monitoring <u>not</u> address?

- A-synchronized fieldwork periods poses a challenge to standardize monitoring and management of fieldwork (Malter, 2014)
- Dashboard, control charts, progress reports that show any 'red flags' will need more context (from NC, agency, possibly interviewer) before action can be taken
- Changing management and monitoring of fieldwork will not immediately show improvements (only gradual)
- More contact data = more information =~ higher quality standards
- Real-time delivery of contact data: data protection restrictions will cause contact data to be uploaded with a (hopefully) short time lag
- Effectiveness of intervention strategies
- …any more?

Summary

- **Moving from decentral to a more central model of monitoring fieldwork will not be straightforward**

- **Monitoring fieldwork in real time will pose challenges that need to be addressed**

- **Interviewer compliance is crucial for case management**

European Social Survey

THANK YOU!

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Opportunities created with changing model from '…&document' to 'monitor&control'.

Experiments to measure effectiveness adjusting fieldwork strategies based on real-time contact form data

Experiments with cross-national fieldwork design can be difficult to implement:

- **Careful planning and management of experiments**
- **Coordination between many different stakeholders (central team, national teams, local survey agencies, local interviewers)**
- **Risky: might compromise comparability of data collected during experiment**
- **Measuring effectiveness of experiment might be difficult: local (documented or undocumented) adaptations can cloud results**

Quality Assurance and Quality Control in ESS

- **Survey Specification: document outlining methods and standards to be followed by all participating countries.**
- **Standards are set to minimize different sources of error; ensure data quality**
- **Quality control and assurance applied throughout the total survey life cycle**
- **Specifically for Fieldwork: QA and QC instruments**
  - Sampling
  - Fieldwork Questionnaire
  - Fieldwork projections
  - Fieldwork progress reports (weekly or bi-weekly)
  - Contact form data
  - Quality Matrix
  - (planned and unplanned) Deviations from Specs
  - Assessment of socio-demographic sample composition